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descendant of an ape, which would be only generically separable from the chimpanzee and the gorilla; and that while the last two are little modified descendants from a common stock, man's structure, in some respects, has been much modified,—but even man's deviation is mostly superficial and psychological.

THEO. GILL.

Washington, Aug. 5.

[We meant by the statement which Dr. Gill criticises, that the immediate exact ancestors of man are not known to paleontologists; and that the morphological evidence has not yet been so fully worked over as to afford definite conclusions as to the evolution of man. The elucidation of the exact affinities of man with various primates still awaits exhaustive study: that he is related to the anthropoid apes, is, of course, well established; but that he is more closely related to them than to any other primates has still to be proven. In suggesting a relationship between man and the monkeys, we meant rather to propound a question, than to advocate a conclusion. In reality, there is probably no essential difference between Dr. Gill's opinion, and the suggestion emitted in our comment, which our critic seems not to have understood as we intended. — ED.]

#### A mad stone.

Your question, Mr. Editor, having regard to Mr. Sampson's letter concerning a 'mad stone,' 'how did such a superstition arise?' admits of a ready answer. Many a porous stone, in good capillary condition, can suck a wound, not so effectively, perhaps, as the lips of Queen Eleanor, but still with considerable power. This fact is especially true in case the stone has been moistened so that close contact between it and the body may be secured, as well as continuity of the fluids, and evaporation from the external surface of the stone, to actuate the capillary flow. Familiar applications of the principle are seen when the country-boy puts a dab of mud upon the spot where a hornet has stung him to compose the pain; and when the housewife uses French chalk, or soap-stone dust, or wet plaster-of-Paris, or, better yet, clay moistened with naphtha, ether, or oil of turpentine to draw out a grease-spot from clothing or from the floor. Thus much for the basis of the 'superstition.' It is assuredly easy to conceive withal that 'mad stones' may have existed of such chemical composition, or charged with such chemical substances, that they could act as germicides as well as absorbents. Indeed, we have already in that most sovereign of balms, powdered chalk for a mosquito bite, something so nearly akin to the ideal mad stone, that your correspondent was more than justified in according to the matter his portion of that careful attention which Arago did extol.

F. H. STORER.

#### THE KONGO FREE STATE.

MR. STANLEY has given a history of the planting of this state, its growth to the present time, and the recognition of its flag and sovereignty by the powers of Europe and America, at the Berlin conference. His book has been supplemented by reports from French and Portuguese travellers; from Lieut. Cameron of the English army, who crossed Africa

from the east to the west a little below the valley of the Kongo; from Mr. W. H. Tisdel, the agent sent by our government to the Kongo; and from Admiral English, commander of our fleet on the African coast. These reports, though somewhat conflicting, can be reconciled, and the truth ascertained.

The Kongo free state, by the terms of the Berlin convention, controls a narrow strip on the northern banks of the Lower Kongo, from the ocean to Stanley Pool; thence the territory extends north-east to between the fifth and sixth degrees of north latitude, and south below the eleventh degree of south latitude, and east to within a few hundred miles of the Indian Ocean, including in its limits nearly all the water-shed of the Kongo and its branches.

The river is navigable from the ocean to Vivi. Between Stanley Pool and Vivi, 235 miles, there is a fall of 1,200 feet, with 80 miles of navigable water between the falls. There are a large number of navigable branches running into the Kongo, and steam-launches have sailed on the Kongo and these branches nearly 1,500 miles. Mr. Stanley estimates, indeed, that there are over 5,000 miles of uninterrupted navigation on them; and that, in addition, the navigable waters of other tributaries would probably bring the total to about 20,000 miles: these estimates cannot be fully relied upon, but there is sufficient evidence to prove that the navigable waters of the Kongo exceed those of any other river in the world.

The land in the eastern part of the watershed of the Kongo is between 4,000 and 5,000 feet in height, falling at first pretty rapidly, and then more gradually, into the great valley of the Kongo, about 1,500 feet above the sea-level.

As the river rises in the east, runs to the west near the Equator, its valley has nearly the same climate, growing more temperate towards the sources of the river. The whole area is abundantly supplied with rainfall.

The outlets for the trade of this vast region have hitherto been south through the Portuguese territory to the Atlantic Ocean at Benguela, or else north-west through the French possessions to the valley of the Ogowé. The Kongo offers the shortest route to the ocean, but the river has cut its way through the chains of mountains; while the Kwilu Niadi, in the territory of the association, and the Ogowé, follow natural valleys, and reach the ocean by longer and easier routes.

Mr. Stanley constructed a road around these falls. It crosses a succession of valleys and steep hills, some one thousand feet in height.